



Grantees interested in participating in training workshops and follow-up onsite help may contact Audrey Smolkin ([asmolkin@hrsa.gov](mailto:asmolkin@hrsa.gov)) for referrals and further information.

July 24, 2001

## DISEASE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

A report released by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in March 2001 noted that, overall, US health professionals were not prepared to deal effectively with chronic disease. To address this pressing matter, Warren Todd, president of Disease Management Resources, LLC, spoke to grantees on July 24, 2001 about the evolving state of disease management efforts.

Todd recalled comments by W.K. Kellogg Foundation President, William C. Richardson, who chaired the committee that developed the report, "Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Richardson said, "The system is failing because it is poorly designed..." and noted that the American health system often wastes resources by providing unnecessary services and duplicating efforts, leaving unaccountable gaps in care and failing to use the strengths of all health professionals.

Todd went on to address the issue of how to reengineer the current system of care by utilizing the new generation of disease management program models, which are vastly different from those introduced just a few years ago, and the careful planning and development required prior to effective disease management program implementation. He discussed development of organization-specific disease management goals and emphasized the importance of installing the appropriate computer-based infrastructures required to track and manage these programs effectively. Todd believes that effective information technology is a critical tool for supporting the changes required to repair an ailing health care delivery system and that health professionals must be open to embracing technology support.

Four recognized criteria are considered essential to the successful development of any disease management program:

- ◆ **Specific Objectives** – Very specific objectives must be formulated that are clearly aligned with an organization's mission. Goals must be meaningful and measurable.
- ◆ **Leadership Commitment** – Organization leaders must be fully committed to implementing disease management programs. Without leadership support, the system cannot work.
- ◆ **Technology Insertion** – Organization staff must be willing to set up the systems and infrastructure needed to build an effective program and support critical information tracking and evaluation activities.

- ◆ **Effective Provider-Patient Communication** – Consistent communication on all organizational levels is vital to successful disease management efforts.

### **Specific Objectives**

In developing its objectives, a disease management team must be willing to undertake significant data mining. Team members must identify which populations can benefit most from disease management protocols and which interventions are most appropriate to each target group. For example, in the case of diabetes, should the focus be on those at risk for diabetes, or on those already diagnosed with the disease? Keep in mind that disease management programs are no longer rigid or narrowly defined. They cannot afford to be. Today, many models overlap. Diabetes programs can cross over into programs designed to lower cholesterol or address cardiovascular disease, end stage renal disease, retinopathy, neurological conditions and even amputations. Clear objectives drive the scope and design of individual programs that differ by organization as well as intent, but artificial borders or barriers among related programs should not hinder Case Managers from working effectively with their patients.

### **Leadership Commitment**

An organization's leadership contingent must be committed to full development of disease management programs and be open to looking at how they work for other providers in the community. It is often helpful to tap into existing community resources, becoming appraised of lessons learned from those colleagues with prior experience on a design team or advisory board that can help guide development efforts.

### **Technology Insertion**

Todd emphasized the role of evolving technology as a key to improving the US health delivery system. He believes that paper-based reports will soon be relics of the past, but that easy access to patient information will be only one of many benefits of well-designed technology-based systems. Effective systems will encompass all aspects of a provider's mission, organizational culture, financial resources etc., and will act as a catalyst for improving teamwork among health professionals and including patients in decision-making processes.

### **Effective Provider-Patient Communication**

Today's disease management programs are more fluid as health care providers acknowledge the need for change, keeping in mind the ways many aspects of medicine and patients' concerns often interrelate. As these programs evolve, the need to continually encourage effective patient-provider communication becomes increasingly evident and critical to patient compliance and overall program success.

In its March report, the IOM recommends that the Federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) identify at least 15 common chronic conditions for which health care professionals can devise strategic treatment plans that, once implemented, have the potential for significant improvement in health outcomes over a 5-year period. Thoughtfully designed, organization-specific disease management programs can act as building blocks for successful redesign of a fragmented health care system, transforming it to a well-integrated, efficient, effective system where patients with chronic conditions, whether insured or uninsured, routinely receive the care they need.

Todd suggested perusal of the following websites for additional information:

- ◆ [www.iom.edu](http://www.iom.edu) - for the March, 2001, report entitled, "Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"
- ◆ <http://www.americanhealthways.com/buildbuy.pdf> and [http://www.americanhealthways.com/res\\_art01.pdf](http://www.americanhealthways.com/res_art01.pdf) - for a disease management process discussion for diabetes from a leading provider of disease management programs.

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